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THE PECULIARITY OF THE RELIGION OF THE BIBLE

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· CONRAD · VON · ORELLI ·

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The Peculiarity of the Religion of the Bible

By
CONRAD VON ORELLI
Professor of Theology at Basle

NEW YORK: EATON & MAINS
CINCINNATI: JENNINGS & GRAHAM

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PREFATORY NOTE

The general character and purpose of these books have already been indicated in the Introduction to the entire series, so that on the publication of this the second part it need only be said that each of the six volumes in this series has a peculiar value of its own. The authors are recognized scholars of high rank in their several fields of research, and while the task of translating the extremely involved German of some of them into good English has been at times most difficult, and something may have been lost in the process, nevertheless their fine perception of divine truth, no less than their scientific method of treatment, will appeal to the honest judgment of thoughtful men and will strengthen conviction in the validity of evangelical teaching.

In St. Paul as a Theologian Professor Feine exhibits Pauline theology as the content of the apostle's missionary preaching based upon his personal experience of Jesus Christ, and not, as certain critics affirm, an attempted systematizing of Christian thought

modified or enlarged by odds and ends of Rabbinic theology brought over by Paul from Judaism. Incidentally, in opposition to the criticism of Wrede, Weinel, and others, the author shows the dependence of Paul upon Jesus.

THE PECULIARITY OF THE RELIGION OF THE BIBLE, by Professor Orelli, is an answer to the ancient query now often heard among some theologians of a liberal type and not a few specialists in the department of Comparative Religion, "Are not Arbana and Pharpar better than all the waters in Israel, may I not wash in them and be clean?" A fitting companion to this volume is THE NEW MESSAGE IN THE TEACHING OF JESUS, setting forth the profound originality of the Master Teacher. DO WE NEED CHRIST FOR COMMUNION WITH GOD? and the excellent volume entitled OUR LORD present in a very clear and satisfactory manner the impossibility of eliminating or of subordinating the Christ of Christendom in Christian thought and life.

It is only stating exact truth when we say that notwithstanding the immense learning and intellectual brilliancy of eminent schol-

ars in the camp of so-called liberal theology, there is evidence, as may be seen in a recent work, The Modern Jesus Cult, by Professor Wilhelm von Schnecten, himself a radical of the modern school, that the equally brilliant and scientifically equipped defenders of the historic faith have shown the emptiness of radical thought and fully established the historicity of the gospel records.

On the whole, we are of the opinion that these volumes, the value of which is not in quantity but in quality, will be found helpful and suggestive, and that a comprehensive survey of the important subjects covered by this foreign religious series will justify the statement that evangelical faith has nothing to fear from unfriendly criticism.

EDITOR.

THE PECULIARITY OF THE RELIGION OF THE BIBLE

I

The Old Testament Religion

"Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations."

Thus Balaam, the heathenish seer, characterized in his first parable the people upon whom devolved the highest mission in the history of religion. That we have to do here with a real prophecy is proved by the many thousand years of history of that people who even in their dispersion among the nations can never wholly deny their racial peculiarity and mental separateness. The Hebrew race owes this peculiarity above everything else to its religion, which was unique among the religions of the nations, as unique as Christianity which arose from it and which, as the highest blossom, was destined to become the universal religion for all nations.

And yet these two, Judaism and Chris-

tianity, do not stand so isolated in the world as has formerly been imagined. To those genealogical lines by which the Israelites felt themselves connected with the entire human race (Gen. 10. 11) correspond also religious relations. It is true that between the most diverse religions inner, though not historical, relations may be proved, which relations rest on the analogy of every human spiritual and mental life biblically expressed; on the self-manifestation of God to all men. But, as a rule, homogeneousness is much more apparent where it concerns consanguineous tribes. As is known, the people of Israel belonged linguistically and ethnographically to the so-called *Semitic* group; we shall therefore not be surprised to find here also the nearest relatives as far as religion is concerned. How was the Israelitish or Old Testament religion related to the religion of the Edomites, Moabites, Ammonites, Arameans, and other nations of like blood, as well as to the religion of the more distant Assyrians and Babylonians who also belonged to the Semitic group?

But let us first examine what is meant by the Old Testament religion. Wellhausen,

Stade, and others assert that the old Israelitish national religion was something different from what is usually understood by the Old Testament religion, namely, a worship of Jehovah[1] as a limited tribal or national god who was originally a god of weather and war, but exercised no authority beyond his people and country. He was not considered as an absolute ruler upon earth or as creator of the universe; nor did ethical qualities belong to his nature, though ethical attributes were occasionally ascribed to him. Thus this Israelitish-Jehovah religion, as to its inner content, did not materially differ from the Chemosh-religion of the Moabites, the Moloch-religion of the Ammonites, the Baal-service of the Canaanites, etc. Since the time of Moses, however, Jehovah was looked upon as a jealous God, who on his soil and among his people would tolerate no other gods (monolatry, not monotheism), but who nevertheless was to share in the government with the Cananæan Baalim, which had already possessed the country and would not be driven from the sacred places. It was

[1] For the name Yahve used by the author, I have substituted the form familiar to English readers.—EDITOR.

only in the eighth century B. C. that the so-called "literary prophets," headed by Amos, proclaimed Jehovah as the sole ruler and at the same time declared his covenant with Israel, which was formerly considered as a natural relation, as one established upon ethical conditions; and as such was indissoluble. These prophets were the founders of the ethical monotheism which after the exile became the religion of the people.

In this conception of the school above mentioned there lies a fundamental error. According to my opinion this false notion has been best refuted by the Scotch scholar James Robertson.[1] But even such a critical investigator as Professor Giesebrecht has shown the untenableness of this view. It is strange therefore that Professor Stade in his Compendium of the Old Testament theology (1905) should repeat it again with such dogmatic confidence. It is the more pleasing that Professor Bantsch[2] has very recently emphasized in the most powerful manner the necessity of revising the historical-evolution schemes of the Wellhausen school after

[1] The Ancient Religion of Israel before the Eighth Century (German second edition, Stuttgart, 1905).
[2] Altorientalischer und Israelitischer Monotheismus, 1906.

he had convinced himself especially by comparing the religio-historical connections that it would not do to press the old Israelitish history of religion into the scheme of the evolution theorists.

In brief we state the following: Even if we should admit without examination the *literary* critical results of a Kuenen, Wellhausen and others which we could not advise, the essential traits of ethical monotheism, it must be admitted, already existed long before the time of Amos, as is seen in the history of Elijah, whose compositions these critics put before Amos, and especially in the ancient Jehovah-document of the Pentateuch, which is certainly of higher antiquity. Think of Genesis 2. sqq., the history of the creation of man, of the paradise, the fall, the deluge, building of the tower of Babel, destruction of Sodom, etc. To avoid these instances Stade would indeed eliminate these portions from the ancient Jehovah-document and consider them as very recent Hebrew revisions of foreign materials which originated shortly before the exile in the time of Babylonian-Assyrian influence. But here the arbitrary character of the criticism is too

notorious. The unaffectedly naive manner in which God is spoken of in these selections, as coming down from heaven upon earth to view the building made by men, of communicating to Abram his purpose to convince himself personally whether the inhabitants of Sodom were as bad as their reputation, shows us indeed the oldest Hebrew writings which have come down to us. Notwithstanding the childlike imperfection in which God is here presented and exhibited, he is nevertheless the Almighty God who dwells in heaven, the creator of everything which is on earth, the all-ruling one who exercises righteous judgment over all nations, and so by no means a limited tribal or national God in whose character the ethical was no constituent element.

These primeval testimonies point back to the pre-monarchical period. Before Samuel Israel must already have had this sublime knowledge of God. From whom could it come but from *Moses,* whom all ancient documents revere as the founder of the Israelitish national religion? But Moses also proclaimed the God whom he preached, not as one who had thus far been entirely un-

known, but as the God well known to the fathers. The name which all narrators of the Pentateuch mention as the first which stood in close relation to the God of Israel is Abram.[1] This name, according to all analogy, can only have been that of a human individual, not that of a god nor of a tribe, as one has tried to make himself believe; and that this personality must be considered as historical, can today be scientifically affirmed with greater certainty, as may be shown from the monuments, than it could have been twenty or thirty years ago.

When we speak of Old Testament or Israelitish religion, we mean that which the religiously enlightened Israelites since Moses, even since Abram, professed. That this monotheism became purified and developed itself from Abram to Moses, from Moses down to Amos and Isaiah, from these down to Jeremiah, is also our opinion. The Bible itself bears witness to this, when for instance it commences a new epoch of religious development with Moses and marks

[1] Properly Abiram—"my father is exalted": a beautiful expression which denotes at once God's eminence and intimacy! See the analogous formations, Abishua, Abimelech, Abinadab, etc.

this epoch by making known a new name of God: "And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob as El Shaddai (by the name of God Almighty), but by my name Jehovah was I not yet known to them" (Exod. 6. 3; see 3. 13 sq.). A new name never means for the ancient Hebrews a mere formal change in the appellation, but has always its objective cause in the new relations of the named. Applied to God the new name means a new disclosure of his deeper being, and according to this an advance of man in his understanding. "Evolution" is not wholly a bad term for this progress, for it expresses a self-unfolding of the Deity which allows man to look deeper into his nature.

It may also be frankly admitted that, in this people as in other nations, higher and lower religious tendencies present themselves simultaneously. The God comprehended by Moses became the common possession of the whole people only incompletely, because heathenishly disposed undercurrents still prevailed among them and often became overwhelming, especially when the people were scattered over Canaan and entered into tribal

relations with the older settlers, who surpassed them in culture. But with Professor Ed. Koenig,[1] one must retain as a fact, historically demanded and conceded, that from the beginning of the national history of Israel we notice a purer religion among the appointed religious leaders of the nation, than may be perceived among their cognate neighbors, or the still more heathenishly disposed Canaanites.

[1] Die Hauptproblem der Altisraelitischen Religionsgeschichte, 1884, G 7. sq.

II

PERSONAL AUTHORS AND BEARERS OF THE RELIGION IN ISRAEL

Whence this higher knowledge of God? Whether we abide by Moses or go back to Abram, according to the testimony of all Pentateuchal sources, it is always an *individual personality* which is mentioned as the human starting point. This is of great importance. It has often been pointed out that personal founders of the different religions are known, whereas others appear as the product and possession of the whole of a tribe or nation. This difference, however, is indeed only a relative one. On the one hand the so-called founders of religion themselves stand on a national native soil, whose influence on them is easily perceptible; on the other hand in the origin of all religions, we must imagine some especially endowed and inspired individuals as being more productive than others, just as in the progress of culture, whether we know their names or not. Yet it is nevertheless of importance for the

whole peculiarity and life of a religion, whether it originated, so to speak, from one personality and is ruled by him, or whether it developed more collectively and is considered as the product of the whole. When a personal genius has impregnated the whole of a religion and is considered as its originator or bearer, the acknowledgment is expressed therein in the first place that religion in its foundation and origin is a personal experience; and in the second place that the difference in the faculty of experiencing this must be very great among individuals. Only a few individuals become distinguished beyond others by this faculty, and hence become authorities for others.

Now, neither among the Greeks in historical time, the Romans, the ancient Egyptians, nor Babylonians, do we find such religious authorities as a Moses, Samuel, and all the great prophets, an Amos and Hosea, an Isaiah and Jeremiah represent. Since in our time we often meet with the assertion that the Israelitish religion is wholly like the Babylonian and an offshoot from it, let us therefore look for once at the ancient Babylonians and Assyrians, and ascertain

who were their authorities in matters of religion. One might perhaps refer to the fact that Hammurabi, king of Babylon, declared that he received his laws from the sun-god, just as Moses derived his from Jehovah. But in the introduction to that code that ruler mainly claims divine authority for his legislation which, so far as the contents are concerned, has nothing to do with religion. For religion itself the Babylonians never appealed to Hammurabi. Every Babylonian could have certain religious exercises, that is, dreams, apparitions, omens or visitations of divine displeasure. In such a case he could consult the interpreters of dreams and signs who formed a separate class of the priesthood; or he could ask the atoning priests who knew which rites and sayings must be applied to banish the evil. This priesthood was in so far an authority for him, but only on account of its superior knowledge. Like the Egyptian, it possessed a transmitted knowledge of the divine and demoniacal powers and of the formulas for their exorcism. Such traditions of magic were easily propagated from one generation to another; they did not require in the practitioner any ethico-

religious conditions. Another Babylonian sacerdotal body mediated to the people astrological knowledge; its brightest minds had most ingeniously observed the course of the stars and made possible the calculations of the course of the sun, moon, and planets. This body was the authority for fixing the calendar with the necessary instructions for the correct use of certain days ruled by special influences of the stars; but on the whole this was no religion but a conception of the world or indeed a religiously colored cosmology. As prominent as these efforts were in a physical respect, and great as was the acumen and methodical endurance to bring them about, as little did it require a religious experience or illumination. Hence the personality of these Babylonian or Egyptian soothsayers and astrologers was wholly unimportant for the matter itself. It only concerned the correct handling of magical technics.

This difference between the alleged religions and the Biblical is very important. Its significance becomes clear at once when one realizes what *religion* means. As truly, in the first place, as religion is a revelation

of man to God, more accurately, such a revelation as the deity with immediate certainty makes to man as ruler[1]; so is it according to its origin and essence a property and an expression of the human personal life. Therefore, the more personal a religion is the more original and vital it is. We shall therefore not be surprised to find that the higher religions are just such as are their personal founders and originators, who according to the conviction of their adherents experienced the deity in an extraordinary manner, whereas religions which came out from a personally undetermined tribal or national circle, generally occupy a lower degree.

It is a characteristic of the Old Testament religion that from the beginning it is consciously witnessed by such men of God who had themselves experienced God's manifestations. This concerns here not merely a founder of religion who, like Abram or Moses, had belonged to remote antiquity, but in the bright light of history, as the examples of an Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zechariah, and others prove. One might

[1] *Orelli*, Handbuch der allgemeinen Religionsgeschichte, 1899, pp. 1 sqq.

call such men religious geniuses; but the term would be unsuitable because these Israelitish prophets were conscious of owing their knowledge and their word not to their own creative genius, but to an experience of God, a *revelation* whereby they wholly knew themselves as the recipients. Who was the giver of these revelations?

III

THE PERSONALLY LIVING GOD OF ISRAEL

The correlate to this knowledge of God by some persons forms the *God* who makes himself known to them. This God is absolutely *personal*. This yields a second characteristic whereby this religion differs from those of cognate nations which were in part outwardly alike. There doubtless existed an inner relationship between Jehovah, the God of Israel, and the national deities of the Edomites, Moabites, Ammonites, Arameans. A closer examination shows that these nations too were not far from being monotheistic. It is an erroneous idea of some modern scholars who think that from the beginning these tribes had only a particular god in view whose powers, according to their ideas, were confined to the narrow limits of their territory.

This view is connected with the assumption that belief in one God is generally the result only of a long historical development.

From belief in demons (Animism) developed in time belief in gods, and from this finally belief in God. This hypothesis is neither supported by history nor by the condition of savages of the present time. In the first instance we find in China belief in a supreme God in heaven as early as the coexisting belief in spirits or ancestral cult. But even among wholly savage African and American tribes one was surprised to find a widely spread belief in a supernatural God, in a God plainly in heaven, to whom not seldom is ascribed the creation of the universe, and who is also not wholly lacking in ethical character. I refer for the Africans to my book (Allgemeine Religionsgeschichte), p. 745 sqq.; for the American red men to p. 775 sqq.; for the Mongol-Tartaric nations which are addicted to Shamanism (spirit-cult) to p. 89; here we only quote two other examples:

The missionary Allégret, a careful observer, reported at the Religious Historical Congress in Basel, 1904, about the *"Fan"* people on the Congo, who had newly come from the bush and up to this time had neither been in contact with Christianity nor with

Islamism. This tribe is so little civilized that anthropophagy is practised by it; but besides the customary superstitious notions and customs which it has in common with the Bantu-tribes, Allégret discovered in time and indeed among the older people and those members of the tribe who remained more in the interior of the country, an ancient belief in God which is expressed in the divine name *Nzame* (just as many other Bantu-tribes). Of this God attributes are predicated in terms belonging to a language now no longer used, like: "The Almighty, the supreme judge, the king of kings, the father of life." This God, which the "Fan" people before they met the whites represented to themselves as being black, but to which they now ascribe a white color, forsook them, according to their account, because of their disobedience.[1]

A second example from an entirely different ethnographical territory, may be taken from the *Australasian Negroes.* These are classed as the lowest race of men. Comparing structure of body and carriage they are

[1] Allégret's notices are given completely in the Revue de L'Histoire des Religions, 1906, pp. 1 sqq.

said to bear a resemblance to apes beyond all others. In civilization they stand just as degraded. They have no metals, no bows, no pottery, no fixed dwellings. In regard to religion they have long been quoted as tribes which had no real religion but a wild Animism. But Dampier, the first European to discover them, having been driven by a storm to their coast in 1688, has pointed out that they were always without the two upper incisors. He praised their unselfishness, although they were the most miserable people he knew, in that they shared everything among themselves, so that the old and weak among them never suffered need. An unexpected light has now been thrown upon these meager notices since these savages have become better known. In the first place it has been ascertained that all these tribes worship a highest being, called *Darumulun* or Bunjil, commonly Biamban (Lord) or Papang (Father). This God, who is also considered as the creator, is benevolent and kind, but very severe against the transgressors of the laws and injunctions prevalent in the tribes. The real name of God should only be mentioned in the Bora, that is, in his mysteries.

An image of him was used in these mysteries, but it was destroyed after the act of consecration. Before this image of the god, the young people were made acquainted with the religious injunctions: reverence for age, avoidance of all inordinate sexual desires, etc. At the same time their stomachs were thoroughly worked to cast out eager desire and selfishness; the breaking out of the front teeth, which act also belonged to this drastic religious instruction, had undoubtedly a like significance; the beast-of-prey nature in man was to be removed thereby. These rites, which according to what has been stated, must have been peculiar to these Australasians long before their contact with Europeans, prove again that a very primitive religious degree may contain *high* elements of a knowledge of God. So-called Animism by no means excludes the worship of a Father-God and Creator, and it might also exercise ethical influence in the noblest sense of the word. If by Animism one understands belief in countless spirits, God can be distinguished from them in the most positive manner, and, as Andrew Lang has demonstrated, it is an undemonstrable hypothesis that is

given out from them.[1] It has, for instance, often been thought that the idea of the highest God has developed from the analogy of the human chiefs and rulers, as if these natural men had found it necessary to supply also the realm of spirits with a regent. But this worship of a God in heaven is found also among such African tribes which have no kings and hardly chiefs, as among these Australians, where political rule is very little developed.

Reverting from this glance at the lowest peoples to the more nobly endowed Semites, we have no reason to oppose the belief that among them from time immemorial the notion of a universal deity, ruling everything, existed; of an El which can also be paraphrased by Baal (Lord), Melech (king), Adonai (ruler), and other names of a "highest God" as Melchizedek worshiped him (Gen. 14. 18), standing above lesser gods. The different Baalim of the Canaanites were not originally mere local genii or demons, but offshoots of a general heavenly deity which, under the name of *Baal samem,* is already attested as one of the oldest Phœni-

[1] See *A. Lang*, The Making of Religion, 1898, pp. 189 sqq.

cian inscriptions.[1] One may also see how these Baalim show so many relations to the sun which certainly could not have been invented subsequently. Does one seriously imagine that these tribes should have been so narrow-minded as to believe that their sun-god which they saw daily completing his sovereign course over the world, manifesting his power, was only limited to the few square miles which their tribe inhabited? The actual limitation was the result of the political relation of the god to the individual tribe, as well as of his endowment with special local predicates and its worship under different images. But the consciousness of its universality was never given up, and it asserted itself in this that over the localized and specialized gods, one easily put again a supreme god of a general character, as the Arabs before Mohammed put their altar over the individual tribal deities and fetiches.

And yet, even aside from ethical difference, there exists an essential difference between the gods of the neighboring, closely related tribes and the notion of the God of ancient Israel. It consisted in this, that

[1] Orelli, l. c., p. 232 sq.; Bäntsch, l. c., p. 40.

Jehovah, in his powerfully expressed personality, is held to be entirely another God than the deity among those other nations. The deities of the Canaanites, Arameans, etc., besides the Babylonians and Assyrians, had something indefinite, dissolving. Hence they could easily divide into male and female halves; could, as has been stated above, increase through political and cultic peculiarities to a plurality and turn again into one another. They were frequently seen together in a single phenomenon (sensuous heaven, light, sun), which invites the setting up of a supplementary analogue (earth, darkness, moon, etc.). Since, however, one was semi-conscious of its more general character, its contemplation is also connected with different phenomena (for instance, with the sun and at the same time with a certain planet); and finally this worship of the most glorious phenomena strove for the worship of a more impersonal natural whole, as the Babylonian priest-religion clearly showed.

In Israel Jehovah remained one and the same indivisible God. True, his spirit or his name, or his face, was distinguished from himself; but from this originated no new

deities, as in Phœnicia, where the goddess Astarte was called "the name of Baal," thus being an emanation of the god, or in Carthage, where the goddess Tanit is called "the face of Baal." [1] If we ask for the reason why the deity of the Israelites did not multiply in like manner and its personality never obliterated itself, we must point in the first place to the fact that as we have seen Jehovah appeared unto some personalities like Abram, Moses, and ever and ever manifested himself to some leading men. In the second place he manifested himself energetically as a living God who enters into life as none of the gods of Aram or Edom. But these manifestations could never have been understood as such unless now and then men had been present like a Moses, Samuel, Elijah, etc., who added the word to the deed and explained to the people the often strange acts of this God. This God who appeared in absolute personality with power suffered no other beside him. For "goddess" the Hebrew language has not even a word. The association of a female partner would appear as an abomination to every Israelite who

[1] Orelli, l. c., pp. 240 and 242.

had grown up in the religion of Moses, inoffensive as this notion was to all Semitic tribes of remote antiquity.

We nowhere find in the Bible a disposition to substitute for the personally conscious God a semi-conscious or unconscious power of nature or power of fate. This personality of God is an inner bond which holds the Bible together from the first to the last leaf, whereas the progressive world-perception of other nations easily led to the putting of a supreme, mere impersonal power in place of the desultory, individual deities; as was done by the Egyptian and Babylonian astronomers and the keen thinkers on the other hand among the Brahmins. In the Old Testament we find the opposite.

I must also expressly oppose those Assyriologists who assert that the biblical narrators of Genesis or of the books of Judges or Samuel or even of the books of the Kings, had in view an astral-scheme, an order of the stars, according to which earthly events were ordered. Whether astronomical figures form the basis of certain primitive forms in Genesis, for instance whether the number twelve of the sons of Jacob is connected with the

signs of the zodiac, is an archæological question which we will not argue here. What I oppose is, that the narrators intended such a connection or presupposed such as already held by their hearers and readers. That, for instance, the biblical narrator who speaks of Abram, how he went from Aram to Canaan, should have thought thereby of the moon-god and intended by this to remind his hearers and readers of the wandering moon; or that, when he tells of Joseph in prison, he had in view the god Tammuz, who was kept imprisoned in the lower world, etc.—these are entries which radically destroy the spiritual and religious stamp of these simple, unconstrained narratives. The more thoroughly the famous and ingenious astral doctrine of the ancient Babylonians is propounded, according to which every earthly event has its heavenly type in the motions and relations of the stars, the more forcefully are we impressed by the very great contrast between this view of the world and the Old Testament where the sovereign God, Jehovah, freely rules in nature and history without being dependent on any scheme.

To this must also be added the *ethical*

element. This is by no means absent from the old-Semitic deity (See Gen. 19 and 20. 11). Where the "fear of God" prevailed in such a tribe, the right of the stranger was also regarded, who was not indeed the protégé of a local tribal god but of the general deity. In the Babylonian version of the Deluge, the motive for destroying the human race seemed to be its wickedness. The god Ea upbraided the god Bel only because he destroyed the human race without discrimination instead of punishing the individual sinner for his own sin, the wicked for his wickedness, and from the Babylonian penitential psalms we clearly see that one saw the cause of suffering not only in the disfavor of a somehow offended God, but also in offences against the moral law. Of such a law the Babylonians had a consciousness as highly developed as the ancient Egyptians, according to a chapter of their book of the dead. But not only did the conception of the magic relation between the divine and earthly sphere check among both peoples the moral influence which religion should have exercised, religion itself was too much confused with nature.

Where the deity is affiliated with nature it easily loses its ethically sublime character. Already the division of the deity into personal plurality became also fatal for it in this respect. From the plurality of gods arises opposition, and where the gods themselves are in a state of mutual warfare, the moral authority which they should have over against man is greatly weakened. How could the deluge make an overwhelming impression on the sinner when the greatest gods, Bel and Ea, afterward quarreled about it, whether it would not have been better had that judgment not taken place, not to speak of the passionate complaints of Istar or the demeanor of other gods who for fear crouched like dogs at the threshold of heaven? We see in these myths as in the poems of the Hindoos, Greeks, Germans, etc., that with the interweaving of the deity into the nature, its moral holiness was soon lost. True that for the religious consciousness these controversies, largely invented in mythical tales, receded in the cult, but here too they annoyingly asserted themselves since man had not to deal with one holy authority but with an indefinite number of

powers whose interests were divided. One complained, perhaps, that he did not know which god he had offended, or he made use of the weakness of these gods in order to throw the favor of one into the scale of the other; worse than this was the natural confusion of the deity which betrayed itself in the very cult of these Semitic nations. This confusion was served by giving free vent to natural impulses, and again with killing the natural life (human sacrifices). Lust and cruelty celebrated their orgies in honor of a deity which had been divested of its higher moral consecration. It is known that the Israelites were surrounded by such specifically heathenish vices (prostitution of women and men, human sacrifices, especially infant sacrifices) and that they often took hold of the people owing to their tendency toward sensuality. But these things were an abomination to the holy God from Sinai, and were again and again cast out when his faithful professors succeeded in awakening the people to fidelity toward him. Jehovah was holy according to his nature, that is, he was superior to the earthly human and especially a consuming fire for all iniquity and sin.

Nothing is so adapted to bring out this superiority of Jehovah over other Semitic gods than a comparison of the historically related Babylonian myths which were, however, animated by an entirely different spirit. This has been sufficiently demonstrated in the brochures of S. Oettli, Ed. Koenig, R. Kittel, A. Jeremias, F. Hommel, and others, called forth by the sensational assertions of the opposite in the Babel-Bible controversy. At present, however, everyone can convince himself of it when he compares the now accessible Babylonian texts with the biblical. Of this only one example:

It is said that the Adapa-myth[1] is another form of the biblical narrative of the fall. This *Adapa* is a man of primeval time, created by the god Ea and endowed by him with wisdom but not with eternal life. He ministered to this his god as priest in the city of Eridu. Fishing one day he was cast into the sea by the bird Zû, the south wind; but out of revenge he broke its wings so that it could not blow for seven days. Anu, the highest god of heaven, became angry and

[1] *Alfred Jeremias,* Das alte Testament in dem Lichte des alten Orients, p. 72 sq.

called Adapa to account; Anu exclaimed: "No mercy!"; yet he suffered himself to be appeased by the doorkeepers Tammuz and Giszida, and ordered them to prepare a meal for Adapa and to give him a festive raiment and oil for anointing. Adapa accepted the dress and oil but refused food and drink at the suggestion of his god Ea which had said to him: "Food of death they will offer to thee, eat not thereof! Water of death they will offer to thee, drink not thereof!" Anu was surprised at this refusal since he had caused that food of life and water of life should be given him, to give him life eternal; thus Adapa forfeited this gift.

One may consider Adapa as the primitive man, and as in Genesis 3 we may here find an explanation why immortality was refused to man—but the ethical inferiority of this legend over against the wondrous narrative in Genesis 3 is obvious. Whether the good god of the depth, Ea, grudged his beloved immortality, thus playing the false part of the serpent, or whether he trusted not the fickle god of heaven—at any rate man became the victim of obedience, not of disobedience toward his creator, and lost

the immortality intended for him in consequence of the miserable disunion of the gods.

With Jehovah, the God of ancient Israel, truth, righteousness, kindness are inalienable attributes. Moral perfection necessarily belongs to his nature. As such he already appeared in the oldest leaves of the Bible which contained pre-Mosaic matter. He punished pride (Gen. 11. 6 sq.), violation of the right of hospitality (Gen. 19. 1 sqq.), the universal corruption of sin (Gen. 6. 5 sqq.), but did not forget the righteous one who, like Noah or Lot, he saved from destruction. We admit that the ruling of this God had in itself yet much that is inexplicable, inscrutable, and that his grace, like his wrath, could not always be traced back to moral propositions, but might sometimes have the semblance of arbitrariness. But this is entirely different from the assertion that he acted capriciously and unjustly. His votaries had themselves cast this reproach far from him (Gen. 18. 25). Conscious, indeed, that they often failed to understand his commands, nevertheless they could not imagine God other than as good, and the more they

developed themselves ethically, the purer they apprehended the nature of their God whom they knew to be the sum of ethical perfection, and that every man stood in his sight as sinful and therefore impure.

IV

DEVELOPMENT OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD IN ISRAEL

Development in Old Testament knowledge of God there certainly was. But whereas we noticed among the Babylonians, Egyptians, Greeks, Hindoos, and other nations, that with the purification of religion personal life in the conception of the deity recedes and vanishes in the minds of the initiated, in Israel we find the reverse. God is, was, and remains the One who is sharply differentiated from the world, the *I* who came to man with a "Thou" and demanded from the people: "Thou shalt *love* the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." This required a personal attitude of the individual heart toward him who comprises in himself fullness of personal life, but so that neither the unity of his consciousness nor the energy of his will shall suffer thereby. Should the childlike anthropomorphisms which are found especially in the oldest leaves of the

Jehovah document be stripped off, the anthropopathies remain, yea, they are increased to the utmost by Hosea, who looked deeper into the heart of God than any of his predecessors. And though one should endeavor to correct occasionally the pathological mingling (see Hos. 11. 9), the personal is retained as an inalienable peculiarity of the God revealed to Israel. Where reference to a personal God recedes and religion is more pleased with the observance of legally constituted ritual, its decay is also obvious as in the legalism of the post-exilic and later rabbinic Judaism.

The ascending development, however, which the Old Testament religion underwent consists in this, that not only was the idea of God himself purified and spiritualized, the high perceptions of a Moses being improved by later men of God, but the relation of the congregation to this God became also more personal.

From the beginning the religion of Jehovah was indeed not a matter of a certain caste or body; it was not so that only the "initiated," distinguished by speculative power, could have perceived the nature of

this God and his true qualities. As little did this knowledge form the content of "mysteries" to which the initiated only were admitted. Jehovah demanded acknowledgment from all people, all estates, sexes and ages, even from bondservants and strangers who dwelt among the people. This essentially distinguished his worship from that "monotheism" which one may find at its best in the speculative formulas of Babylonian and Egyptian priests. The god whom they saw in high contemplation was on this account already different from the Israelitish because it was not objected to that the common people worshiped the deity in a number of partial phenomena.

Only in an isolated manner do we find in those religions the claim of a god to autocracy. Thus in Egypt, especially under Amenhotep (Amenophis) IV, about 1400 B. C., who in opposition to the Theban priesthood and the powerful god Amon, insisted upon the sole worship of the sun-god in the form of the winged disc of the sun. On this account he was considered an apostatized heretic. It is more likely that he borrowed his ideas from the Semites than

that Moses, whose God Jehovah had no relation to the sun, should have learned from him. According to E. Naville his more political motives induced him to adopt the rite of Heliopolis without forming, however, a higher notion of his god than the other Egyptians.

Recently one has imagined that he perceived an analogy to this Egyptian struggle for monotheism in the commendation of the God Nabu (Nebo) by the Assyrian king Ramman Nirari (about 790 B. C.), and he considered it not as accidental that shortly after this time lived that Israelitish prophet, Jonah, the son of Amittas, who preached the true God at Nineveh, and that Amos appeared at Bethel proclaiming a purified monotheism. But we cannot attach much weight to this coincidence. We read indeed in the inscription of the famous Nebo-statue of that Assyrian king at the end: "Man of coming times, trust in Nebo! trust not in any other god!"[1]

A tendency to perceive the divine in a centralized form, we also meet with in the

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[1] Orelli, l. c., p. 185 sq.

ancient Babylonian moon-cult,[1] also in sun worship.[2] But aside from this, that that recommendation of the god Nebo might also have other motives (sympathy with a certain priest-party, etc.), Amos would certainly have strongly opposed the presumption to perceive his God in a form as presented by the Nebo-statue. Jehovah was absolutely an entirely different being; and the appearance of the herdsman of Tekoa was not caused by a theological wave which had brought purer ideas from the interior of Asia. As he himself vividly describes it, he was called by his God from the flock to his prophetical office with an impetuosity which he could withstand as little as one can guard himself from terror when suddenly the roar of a lion is heard in immediate vicinity (see Amos 7. 14 sq. and 3. 8). It is not a learned priest who is imbued with foreign influences and brings a new teaching to his people, but a common man of the people who was so apprehended by his God that he had the courage to oppose the heads of the secular and spiritual government. He sounded the

[1] Orelli, p. 182 sq., the Hymn to the Moon-god.
[2] Ibid., p. 192 sq.

trumpet of alarm to warn them of the judgment of *that* God who has always proved himself to be the all-powerful and holy one in Israel.

That this God had power over all nations, he by no means proclaims as something new but recalls the fact as something old. This only must be admitted, that as the political horizon expanded at that time, so also this divine ruler assumed grander dimensions before the eyes of the nation. The particularism of restricted isolation was roughly broken through by events, and one learned to look also at the designed leading of other nations by Jehovah. That it served a largely concerned plan with a positive object in view, Isaiah made especially clear, and this purpose or goal of the history of the world has since been kept in view by the prophets in an ever more insistent manner. The Mosaic God, in spite of his terrific majesty, revealed that grace and mercy were of his innermost essence (Exod. 34. 6 sq.). More and more the knowledge grew that the nations existed not simply to glorify God as objects of his wrathful judgment, or to serve him as instruments of judgment on

his own people, but that they were also objects of the loving care of God and were destined after their obstinacy was broken down to serve the true God who would also gloriously manifest himself in Israel for them, in order that they should take part in his blessings and saving mercies. The very Babylonian exile which on the one hand served to fill the Jews with an insuperable repugnance to the idolatrous aberrations of heathenism, brought them on the other hand into closer contact with the human race outside and contributed no little to the fact that illuminated minds among them conceived the religion of Jehovah in a more universal manner.

V

Development of the Relation of the Old Testament Church to God

Contemporaneously with this development a progressive individualization of religion was effectuated. It showed itself more as a relation of God to individual members of the congregation, whereas formerly the individual receded behind the national. In this too it has often been generalized too much and judged too categorically. It has been asserted that in older times the Israelitish religion, in general, knew of no relation of the individual to Jehovah but only of the tribe or people to God. Only the people were the object of divine love, care, and sympathizing guidance. The individual could not confidently expect it in private or personal matters; this was an exaggeration of a true perception. How God cared for the individual even in the smallest things and punishes the sins of the individual, the oldest patriarchal stories have already proved. One could not put aside reference

to them with the consideration that an Abram, Isaac, Jacob, as types of the future people, had to stand in just the same relation to Jehovah as the whole people afterward stood. In the consciousness of the pious Israelites these fathers were not common ideas but personalities of flesh and blood, and their example showed how Jehovah dealt with his votaries, how he visited them in mercy or punished their shortcomings. That he thus stood to them in a certain personal relation and treated them individually was understood as a matter of course. In those family-stories (history of Joseph) we find overwhelming evidences that God not only keenly observed the individual acts of men and rewarded or punished them according to incorruptible justice, but also so directed them in a most specific way that they would finally serve his plan. Thus migrating men of Israel certainly encouraged themselves by Jacob's example whom his God so faithfully preserved abroad and helped him to fortune and prosperity. And the women in ancient Israel, a Hannah or the Shunammite, the friend of Elisha, in their domestic concerns and matrimonial

cares could not think otherwise of God's rule than as was told of the wives of Abram, Isaac, and Jacob, where affecting traits are not wanting which serve to show that God cared also for the tender feelings of a wife and mother and espoused their cause (Gen. 29. 31; 21. 16 sq.).

It lies in the nature of the thing that in the historical books of the Old Testament as a rule we only hear of God's ways with the people as a whole. Family life is only mentioned where it became of importance for all Israel. In like manner the prophets as a rule were only concerned about the welfare of the people. Nevertheless it is hardly correct when one imagines that men of God like Samuel, Nathan, Isaiah, and others, considered public affairs only as worthy of special illumination by God's prophetical word. One certainly asked of them instruction also in private affairs, instruction not merely in the sense of a legal decision, but also of direction, counsel, and comfort in perplexing questions and under heavy personal inflictions. With what loving care such a man of God could even enter into the little needs of the private life and remove them through

God's light and power, the history of Elisha shows. It has been asserted against a "ministerial" activity of this man that in those narratives from the colonies of the prophets the question was only of alleviating outward needs (in the present pastoral case it occupied perhaps no less a place), but the main thing here is this, that the individual life also (not merely the communal or national life) was governed by God's powers of grace; and when, as we accidentally learn, the same prophet on the new moons or sabbaths gathered around his dwelling on Mount Carmel the religious people from the neighborhood (2 Kings 4. 23), he there spoke to them in the name of his God certainly not only of national affairs, but entered also into their personal, spiritual wants.

It is, however, correct that in the course of time the relation between God and the congregation deepened and became thereby more personal and individual. The small communities of the faithful which Elisha gathered around him, in part in the groups of the prophets, were at that time a kind of *ecclesiolæ in ecclesia;* such existed before

and constituted at the time of Elijah those seven thousand who bowed not their knee unto Baal. Here already tribal relationship or consanguinity with national theoretical recollections no longer formed or conditioned communion, at least not such alone, but belief in the ancient deeds of Jehovah. Allegiance to him was decisive and also that communion which the prophetic word had established and fostered. This was the kernel of the people of God which, according to Isaiah and all his successors, was destined to form the "remnant" of the future, a remnant in which the national church should live on through all the judgments of God and extend into the time of final salvation in order to realize some day the idea of the theocracy.

In these prophetical hopes of the future the later so-called Messiah occupies a prominent place. In this also the strong tendency of this religion toward personal development expresses itself. The living and ruling "anointed of Jehovah" occupied in religious respect already an important position; and though analogies are found for it elsewhere, also it is peculiar to the Israelitish religion

that it expects its consummation from a king of the future, in whom the Godhead and humanity shall meet the closest relation. This hope is not connected with a future priest but with a scion of the house of David, a king after the heart of Jehovah. In him Israel would somehow be personified in order to enter upon the closest union with God thinkable. When the people in their representative head should be so harmoniously united with the Lord, the serenity of God's pleasure in his people and the prosperity of the latter comes of itself.

It is true with this son of David, rich in honors, there is a remarkable contrast in the picture of the "servant of Jehovah," who is delineated in certain portions of the second book of Isaiah (Isa. 42. 1-4; 49. 1-6; 50. 4-9; 52. 13-53). But these very peculiar descriptions of the perfect servant form a grand proof of the effort of this religion toward personification. For the idea of this servant and his office proceeds very properly from the calling of Israel as the people of Jehovah. This people were called to the service which the servant rendered, but proved themselves very unfit for it. Thus

comes before the eye of the seer a figure who performs it without fault. That this figure cannot be identical with the people, present or future, is most clearly seen from passages like Isa. 42. 6 sq.; 49. 6; 53. 8, where the people appeared rather as the object of his deliverance and atonement. In the picture, delineated in a strictly personal manner, a plurality of godly, prophetically active sufferers and confessors might at most be uniformly comprised, but should one have asked the seer who outlined the picture whether he expected the fulfillment through an individual or a collective plurality, according to my conviction he would have answered in the former sense. For this view speaks not only the analogy of the Israelitish history, where in the greatest epochs an *individual* formed the medium through which the whole work of the Lord was mediated, thus Moses and Joshua, Samuel, David; but the servant himself is very clearly made knowable as a second Moses or Joshua, for instance, Isa. 49. 6, and also the references to the Hope which one expected from the future son of David, are by no means wanting, as Sellin has especially

proved. It is therefore a scion who proceeded from the people but by far surpassing them in dignity and disposition, who would help the people to a right attitude before God and at the same time bring the distant inhabitants of the world to an acknowledgment of the revelation of Jehovah.

The many-voiced echo of prophetical revelations we find in the Psalms. These allow us to look into a more living, more affecting, more personally reciprocal relation between Jehovah and his worshipers than the hymns of the Riga Veda, or the Babylonian penitential litanies with which they have already been compared. It is also a mistake to assume that the *I* of the Psalms is always collective, spoken in the name of the congregation as has recently been done again by prominent specialists. True, the personification of Israel as a national or cultic unit in preëxilic as in postexilic time is nothing unusual. See the "Thou" in the Decalogue and in the Aaronic blessing (Num. 6. 24-26). Why should a singer not speak, pray, praise in the name of his congregation? In the Psalms of Solomon, those apocryphal

hymns from the time of Pompey, this is doubtless the case. But the prayer of Habakkuk (Hab. 3) speaks, after verse 14, in the name of the congregation. In the Lamentations of Jeremiah such seems also to be the case; and in the prophets we frequently find examples or statements of such hymnological performance of the congregation where it speaks of itself with I. Such hymns may also be expected in the Psalms; but it is an unauthorized preconception to suppose such there throughout, for there are hymns in which he who prays is clearly enough distinguished from the congregation for whose edification he gratefully wishes to make known his personal experience of salvation; see Psalm 22 (verse 26), 40 (verse 9 sq.), and others. Outer experiences, and inner feelings especially, are very often too individualistic not to be wholly of a personal nature; and as a rule those individual songs of prayer very clearly detach themselves from the cultic hymns mostly belonging to the later postexilic time, which were evidently composed for the religious service of the congregation. Even if one takes a song like Psalm 23, where the question might

perhaps arise whether it was sung in the name of a righteous individual or of the godly congregation, feelings of communion with God are here (as in so many of these glorious hymns of prayer, and also in the penitential hymns, Psa. 32, 51) so devout and warm that, at any rate, they must have been first experienced by the individual before they could have been put into the mouth of others. Thus the Psalter is a rich source of proofs how personally and individually this Old Testament religion developed in the congregation. And these proofs belong to many centuries. The statement supported by the entire tradition that King David had given an impulse to psalmody, deserves by no means the skeptical refusal which today is frequently bestowed upon it. Whoever reads the description of David's behavior at the rebellion of his son Absalom (2 Sam. 15. 19), which was certainly composed by a contemporary, will at the outset believe this king, with his fervent and tender as well as truly pious feeling, capable of such lyrical Prayers as Psa. 3, 4, 51, and others. And whoever knows the prophets Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah, cannot doubt that

the preëxilic Israel had its cultic lyric poetry, and he will not be surprised to hear in Psa. 137. 3, that it was known in Babylon. Our present Psalter is indeed the hymn-book of the second temple, not in the sense that all these hymns were composed after the exile, but rather that just as in our church hymn-books, an old treasure of hymns was received into it when many things may have been changed in language or otherwise through frequent use.

This much may safely be ascertained from the Psalter as from other sources, that personal communion of the individual with God was at all times very active among pious Israelites. True, the hieratic apparatus was still highly valued; but already in the older time, just as in this, we find close communion of pious individuals with God. And progressive prophetical revelation developed this personal relation ever more freely. Think of it, how the great prophets of the eighth century abolished sacrifice as non-essential, yea, as rather impeding true attitude toward God; how Jeremiah represented the covenant-sign of circumcision as worthless unless the ears and hearts were

circumcised; how the same prophet destroyed the trust in the temple as the holy habitation of God and considered it as unnecessary in a better future (Jer. 3. 16), even the sacred palladium of the Ark of the Covenant, when the Mosaic covenant should be replaced by a *New Covenant* which would be founded not upon outwardly written tables but upon changed *hearts* (31. 31 sqq.). But let me also observe how Ezekiel, who likewise so strongly emphasized change of heart as the condition of future right relation with God (Ezek. 36. 25 sqq.), at the same time asserted as none else did the individual treatment of the individual by the righteous God and thereby also most emphatically enjoined upon human pastorship its responsibility (Ezek. 18. 1 sqq.; 33. 1 sqq.).

It is evident how much such teachings could contribute to the independence of religious personalities in the congregation; only it is a mistake to assume that such verities, when once apprehended by the individual, must of themselves become the common property of the people or of the righteous. The external character of piety which

the following centuries brought shows the reverse. Religious cognitions do not evolve like technical inventions and practices; on this account advance in this department is neither constant nor rectilinear. But there came an epoch for Judaism when all the noblest sap which had come up in the tribe produced a blossom in which, humanly speaking, the tribe surpassed itself.

VI

THE PERFECT BEARER OF GOD-COMMUNION —CHRIST

Jesus Christ professed the God of Moses and of the prophets. So far he brought no new religion. But being united with God in a unique manner, he brought a new one by bringing about through his person a new revelation of men to God, and thus made this relation more personal.

He himself called this God *his* Father and by so doing attested a unique connection in which he stood with God, a relation, which in contradistinction to all men, even to his disciples, must belong to him. The distance between the Master and his disciples of which we spoke above (p. 19) becomes here the greatest, hence his authority, which is the highest. Not only according to his own statements but also according to the claims of his appearance, Jesus stood in such a near relation to God that the terms "inspiration," "revelation," fail to convey the full idea. God did not merely appear unto him, did

not merely reveal himself to him, did not merely send his Spirit into him, but over against the world and men he knew himself as one with God. The future "theocracy" was at the same time *his* kingdom. "He that seeth me seeth the Father." But no trace of pantheism is found here as if he could no more distinguish the *I* and *Thou*. The Father is so consciously and clearly distinguished from his own I, that on a certain occasion he could also say: "Not my will, but thine be done." And whenever he spoke of the Father it was done with a fervor, an unreserved love, a childlike trust, that one must feel how real for him was this personal life of the Father. Deeper yet than all the prophets he knew the nature of God as personal. The attitude of Jesus toward God is without analogy among the religious geniuses whom humanity has produced. The meaning of religion has obtained in him a peerless perfection. Here we have the perfect relation of God and man in the Son of man who was at the same time the Son of God.

Mohammed scrupled at nothing so much as that God should have had a son. His

Allah, of whose strictly undivided unity he was so proud, lacked the fullness of the personal life which was perfected in the Father of Jesus Christ. Allah's relation to Mohammed himself is much more outwardly. The "prophet" to whom, in the language of the Mohammedan theologians, Allah threw his revelation-sayings like shooting-stars, stood in no inner relation to him—with his inner man he had nothing to do. This is most obviously perceived from this, that an ethically satisfying influence upon his person did *not* proceed from these revelations. This want, which strongly contrasts his mission with that of the Old Testament prophets, and when compared with the conduct of Christ altogether denotes a pitiful decline, threw also an unfavorable light upon the god preached by him. This want was in general no less in his zealous professors. They too obtained no living reciprocal relation between God and man; and where a mystical absorption in Allah was sought as in the case with the Çufi under Persian influence, the deity dissolved pantheistically. Islamism was not, as its professors thought, the highest degree of monotheism, but

showed that it was about to relapse into the naturalism of heathenism.

Nor did Buddha, whom one is inclined to put by the side of Christ as the founder of a "universal religion," deserve this honor. What induced Sakamuni to seek deliverance whereby he could first deliver himself and then all men, was evil, sickness, age, death. Fear of these made him an ascetic and when he saw that the sore Brahmanic self-affliction did not, after all, deliver him from the fear of death, he became a meditating philosopher. While meditating he imagined that he found the means of deliverance for all men in the knowledge of the four fundamental truths whose practical result is that man must free himself from all lust, all desire for life, and therefore extricate himself from family ties and worldly affairs, in order to be released from the entire enchainment of causes and effects which hold man in the spell of the evil world.

Already this starting-point of the mission of Buddha stood below that which prompted Jesus to redeem men. Jesus cared for something higher than that he himself could escape from evil and afterward deliver

others from it. He cared for the kingdom of God; for the will of his Father. He perceived the root of all evil to be the estrangement of men from God.

Buddha also perceived that evil had an ethical cause. He strongly emphasized that every deed, whether good or bad, is closely followed by its reward; but he knew nothing of God, the Father. The gods of India were for him indifferent figures. Man needed no God for his deliverance; he must deliver himself by keen thinking and strength of mind; there is no other way. Buddhism preached a moral philosophy and its five fundamental commandments were almost identical with those of Moses contained in the second Table; but of the first Table, of duties toward God, Buddhism knew nothing. Prayer is therefore omitted; in its place is cosmos, contemplation, absorption into the unconscious which gives a blessed foretaste of Nirvana; the evaporation of personal existence and consciousness, the final hope of the true disciple of Buddha.

Here we miss that which is constitutive for every religion, the relation of man to the deity. Ancient, original Buddhism

should be called a life-philosophy rather than a religion. It had never become a religion of the people, but, like Manichæism, would have remained an order for the world-escaping cultured had it not experienced an essential change in the interest of popularization, whereby its too highly strained idealism took an opposite turn. Had Buddha disdained every cult he now would have become an object of worship among a number of other gods associated with him. The cult became external, mechanical beyond anything seen in many religions. It is true thatSakyamuni should not be held responsible for this degeneration, but without it Buddhism had never become one of the most diffused religions. The small *élite,* however, which at present conforms to Buddha in decided alienation from family and worldly affairs, has no real religion in its system, but an insufficient equivalent for it. A religion without belief in deity, without prayer, without hope, lacks all that which is necessary for religion. The heroic virtues, contempt of the world and of self-devotion, may grow also on philosophical soil; but the love in which Buddhism glories must not be confounded with that of

the Christian. It lacks the root which the latter has in its faith. Only when man knows God as his Father, can he truly love his fellow-men as his brothers. Schopenhauer has indeed imagined that the Buddhist love ought to be preferred to the Christian because it goes out indiscriminately also to animals; but in this we see rather the inferiority of this contemplation of the world which proceeded from Indian naturalism. Buddhist love did not concern itself with the divine in man, it was mere sympathy with nature, and over and above it is strongly influenced by calculation. One does not really love his fellow-man but wishes to get rid of himself, and to do this he must help him. Where there is no positive life-aim, love becomes aimless.

It would be difficult to understand how in our days Buddhism could be successful in any degree on the soil of civilized Christendom—a doctrine which neither knows how to satisfy religious need nor is able to put before man a world-task which gives some value to life—did we not know that many have made shipwreck of belief in God and his gospel of love concerning the world, and

consequently have fallen back on a wretched pessimism for which the profound Indian itinerant preacher seems to offer them a worthy setting. Add to this that modern Buddhist missionaries do not demand strict Buddha-discipline, with its monastic renunciation, and that over and above all the system is mixed with a strong admixture of modern aromatics, especially American spiritism, and is thus made palatable for "modern" truth.

VII

THE CONSUMMATION OF THE CONGREGATION THROUGH A PERSONAL RELATION TO CHRIST

In formal respects Buddhism shows many points of contact with Christianity. Consideration must be especially had to this, that Buddha did not consider belonging to a nation or caste the basis for forming a congregation, but assent to his teaching and its observance, thus making it an entirely personal matter. National Brahminism was thus developed through Sakamuni into a personal religion. On biblical soil Christianity made the same progress over Judaism.

The *congregation of Christ* was established according to another principle than that of the Old Testament. Not birth, not the law of the country or people determined discipleship, but the personal attitude toward Jesus. "Christians" (Acts 11. 26; 26. 28; 1 Pet. 4. 16), adherents of Christ, the people were called who believed on him. This

"sect" was composed of a people of both sexes from all manner of origin, nation, language, education, but by its very belief in Jesus as the Anointed of God it was inwardly kept together, so that their unity and brotherly love surprised everybody. Later development must not make us forget that Christianity was originally and according to its essence not a national but a personal religion. The inner personal attitude of the individual determines his relation to the congregation, to the Church of Christ. Herein consists an essential moment of the progress of spiritualization and inwardness from the Old to the New Covenant, from Judaism to Christianity.

It is no less important to acknowledge and to hold fast that the new relation in which believing Christians stand to God as their Father, is not merely opened by Jesus, discovered and proclaimed, but is *conditioned by his person.* Even according to the three first gospels Jesus presented himself as the One who decided on reception into or exclusion from the kingdom of God. He personally remitted men their sins just as he healed their diseases. His many healings

which appertained to his daily work were not merely proofs of mercy; for, according to his mode of thinking, he did not care so much that these children of men should enjoy a few more years the use of their sound limbs, but rather for this, that they should enter into the kingdom of God. For said he: "It is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell," etc. (Mark 9. 43-47). These healings had rather also the expressed purpose to justify him as such who had power to forgive sins (Mark 2. 10 sq.) and altogether to prove him as the promised Christ (Matt. 11. 4 sq.; see also 11. 21 sqq.). Where Jesus gave his disciples powers of this kind, to heal diseases, to drive out impure spirits, etc., he told them to act *in his name,* as it were in his place. He also gave them not merely a doctrine concerning God and directions for a God-pleasing life which were also valid aside from his person, so that they could practice his injunctions also without him, but what he taught them and made them do, was to stand in immediate relation to the kingdom of God, whose King he is, which kingdom came in his person and

the full development of which was to be expected in the future.

But a necessary preliminary condition which must be fulfilled ere this glorious consummation could come about was, according to the statements often repeated by Jesus, his impending suffering, death, and resurrection in the near future. These assurances of Jesus have not received as yet their proper recognition by some of our modern theologians. Just as formerly in the old rationalism, so now on the part of some, a teaching is pointed out as the essential service which Jesus rendered to humanity, which could just as well have been founded on itself as upon his person, a teaching of the goodness and love of the heavenly Father, as whose child one may feel himself in all conditions of life and despite of the accusations of conscience, and of the brotherly love which one should show to all men, even to his enemies —a teaching, therefore, which one may see already fostered in the Old Testament and which Judaism could pluck as ripe fruit without further special revelation of God. It is not easy for these theologians to explain the great stress which Jesus put upon the neces-

sity of his suffering and violent death. They would look upon this suffering and death only as a kind of appendix and specimen to that very teaching. Here Jesus's trust in God proved itself under the most difficult circumstances conceivable, and showed his love to men in that he held back this proof of it to the last.

I confess that this explanation of his undeniably voluntary death, considered in a purely human, historical way, strikes me as improbability itself. Whoever compares the careers of other great founders of religion, of a Confucius, Buddha, Mohammed, must above all things be surprised at the very disproportionate shortness of the ministry of Jesus. If he desired above everything to impress men with such teaching by his word and example, he had to preach and propagate this truth as long as possible, in order that it would have time to take sufficient root in closer and wider circles; and with his unlimited trust in God, he could not doubt at all that a long and successful activity was assigned to him, from which one could expect that it would serve its purpose. Instead, he speaks almost from the begin-

ning and again and again of the cross, of his coming suffering, and violent death; yea, he speaks of it in such a manner (for instance, Mark 10. 45; Matt. 20. 28) as if he considered it as the chief object of his coming, the climax of his mission! He could not have had in view a mere didactic martyr-death. Before definitely formulating his teaching in any way, and before it was understood in any degree—if only by his most select disciples—and remembering all the misunderstandings of his teachings unto the last evening—how could he run so prematurely to a martyr-death to confirm by his example the truth of his teaching! And if he wanted *this,* if he really meant to illustrate merely the victory of trust in God, or as, for instance, Ritschl explained the meaning of ransom, if he wished to show to his followers that one must not fear death since the pious became not objectless in death—he should not have died *this* death; he ought to have died like a Socrates, without sign of pain, convincing his disciples by his serene face that death is nothing. He dared not be sore amazed and very heavy in Gethsemane at the mere approach of

death; he dared not exclaim from the cross: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" *This* end, leaving aside the resurrection as problematical or unhistorical, is a bad pattern for his followers. Only one inference can be drawn from it: "If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" If trust in God has not kept the most godly of the sons of God from such a dreadful end, what right have we to expect from God anything better!

Wholly aside from the Christian faith, it seems to me an impossibility from a purely historical and religio-comparative point of view to ascribe to Jesus that scheming intention, considering his evidently spontaneous surrender to death. If we only had the three synoptists, and no Gospel of John, and not one Pauline Epistle, I could only infer from the words of Jesus and his entire demeanor that, according to the prophecies of Scripture, he seems to have considered his suffering and death as his principal work for which his teaching was preparatory; and the voluntary surrender of his life unto death he seems to have conceived as a necessary atonement for the sins of men, and by

which he expected to redeem many from the curse of sin and its consequences. In other words, what one calls the Pauline doctrine of redemption is only the development of that which Jesus consciously endeavored to obtain.

By this position which Jesus occupied over against his congregation, Christianity essentially differed not only from Judaism but also from Islamism, Buddhism, and other spiritual religions. Mohammed is merely a prophet, though "the seal of the prophets" is merely a guide to lead men back to salvation by the "straight way." But Jesus claims to be himself "the Way." Buddha pretends to be the enlightened one who knew the truth. But Jesus called himself the "Light and the Truth." Herman Oldenberg, the acknowledged authority on primitive Buddhism, once said that we could wholly fancy away the person of Buddha without any detriment to his system. He is, then, only one of the Buddhas who have appeared in the course of the æons to make known again the hidden or forgotten way to deliverance from the burden of existence.

It is entirely different with the Gospel of

Christ. By eliminating from it the person of Jesus Christ, it loses its firm hold and deeper content. The statement that we are children of God, of the God who is Love—which may be stated as the essence of Christianity—would only too soon succumb to opposing experiences which rush against it from the outside world and from one's own consciousness and conscience. And even if it could yet scantily assert itself, it would lose the deeper content which it has in the gospel and would sink down to a vague feeling which we find in all grades of culture, in religions of the most varied kind where God is called on as Father of mankind, save that no higher power of life proceeds from this consciousness.

But if we emphasize the ethical as well as the essential in the teaching of Jesus, a comparison of Confucius and the Chinese masters is to be recommended. The old rationalism has not seldom compared Jesus and Confucius. It did it with a certain right because, as a moralist, it esteemed Jesus the most. Now it is remarkable that, to the question whether there exists a single word which could serve as a central maxim for

the whole life, Kong-tse answered: "Is not reciprocity such a word? What you wish not done unto you, do also not to others."[1] Thus, what Jesus indicated (Matt. 7. 12) as the contents of the Law and the Prophets, Master Kong praised already 550 years earlier as the sum of ethics. Jesus, it is true, goes further by demanding: "Love your enemies!" This the Chinese expressly refused with the words: "By recompensing the wrong with goodness, how then shall goodness be recompensed? Recompense wrong with right and goodness with goodness." But these are very much mistaken who think that Jesus was the first who preached love for enemies. Kong-tse refused it as an exaggeration for the very reason that his predecessor Laotse had taught it. And when in certain quarters Jesus had recently been represented with great partiality as a social, moral philosopher, he had in that *Micius*,[2] a not unworthy analogue, who was indeed not considered orthodox but wholly proceeding from the religious ideas of ancient China, taught: "As heaven loves

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[1] Orelli, l. c., p. 69 sq.

[2] Ibid., l. c., pp. 74 sqq.

all men without discrimination and does good to all, thus let one love all." His maxim was: "Love that of the other like your own. Would all act accordingly, all social relations would turn out happily." He expects therefrom an undisturbed government of the heaven over all the earth. At the same time it is significant that the objection that such a kingdom of mutual love cannot be brought about on account of the egotism of man, he answered: "If the good example would be given from above and reward and punishment would be used for that end, it could be accomplished. How have courtiers put themselves already out of the way to please the rulers! And if they only would condescend to such an exercise of love, one would experience that love begets love and therefore yields much profit." This optimism with reference to the human will and power is characteristic of all these Chinese teachers. They always imagine that man on the whole is good, and if he is only set right and sees the good example, it cannot fail. Jesus did not share this optimism; otherwise he would not have prepared for death.

We see, however, that the specific in Christianity does not lie even in the teaching of a humanity of the furthest extent; its essence lies in the person of Jesus united with God and in his unique intercession for man. By this the disciple of Jesus is also inseparably united to this person. For Christ is not only the teacher but the priestly mediator, who assures for him access to the heavenly Father. This gives to genuine Christianity its special peculiarity. We have not a hieratic apparatus, an impersonal institution, which assures to the individual his salvation; this is a degeneration of genuine Christianity in the churches of a Catholic type. It is also a degeneration when in certain newer Protestant theology it is sometimes taught. As a member of the Christian Church I have part in Christ. Rather, when and so far as I have a share in Christ have I become and am a member of the true, believing Church of Christ.

For this we may only refer to a characteristic life-form of the Christian Church. In comparative religion, ministerial acts peculiar to a religion are always especially important. Now Christianity has only two

such forms which specifically belong to it: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. It is of great interest to note how strongly these two acts testify the indispensableness of a living relation of the individual to the person of Jesus. Holy *baptism* is given in the name of Jesus. It is an immersion and submersion of the human person; the going down, as it were, of one's own ego, in whose place, through the power of Jesus Christ, is to come another, a new one. "Know ye not," writes Paul, "that as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead, even so we should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6. 3 sq.). This, however, is the Christian rite of initiation which is performed on those who believe in Christ. Only after one has given up his own person and taken Christ, as it were, in its stead, does he become, on the whole, a member of the church.

Baptism, the " washing of regeneration," means thus a radical break with the past. Is it not strange that Israelites, Mohammedans, Hindoos, who inwardly are closely connect-

ed with Christianity, show an insuperable aversion to baptism and cannot bring themselves to receive it? This does not rest upon a mere prejudice against an outward formality, but on a correct feeling that many Christians have with regard to baptism. These feel that in it there lies the giving up of the natural man, which is more painful than mere circumcision or the tooth-drawing of the Bora, or the cruel consecrations of the Mithra-service. It concerns directly the *death* of the old man in the name of Christ.

But when a man through his incorporation in Christ, the Risen One, has come to a new life from above, he can only preserve this life by communion with the person of Christ. This expresses as clearly as word and symbol can speak, the *Lord's Supper.* Here Jesus assigns *himself* as meat and drink. The Christian is to feed and to live upon him who personally is the Giver of the highest salvation. Jesus could not more strongly express the connection of each individual disciple to his person. Here are entirely confirmed the Johannine statements: "I am the bread of life." "Without me ye

can do nothing!" "Abide in me, and I in you," etc.

The idea of the church, the *communion* of Christians among themselves, is indeed of great importance in Christianity; but compared to the relation of the individual to Christ, this communion of the Christians among themselves is secondary, for it is established by that and always remains conditioned by that. The closest communion of Christians comes about only through the *Holy Spirit,* who comes *to every one* and becomes his personal possession after that he has become a believer in Christ. Thus the Christian state is perfected by a communion of the human with the divine personal Spirit, which cannot be obtained outside of Christianity. We see Christianity as *the* religion in which the divine *personal life* opens the purest and richest, and pervades man in the most personal manner. On this account it alone perfectly realizes the idea of religion. It is the true, the perfect religion.

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